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ABSTRACT

A case study was done of the Stay-in-School Partnership (SSP) between Fordham University (Bronx) and New York City Public School Districts in East Harlem and the South Bronx with high minority student concentrations. In particular, 3 to 5 elementary schools participated, including 120 children spanning kindergarten through grade 5 and their parents (24 percent African American and 66 percent Hispanic American). The case study was done in the program's sixth year. It sought to specify successful dropout prevention practices and strategies; examine the short- and long-term effects yielded from attendance records, educational achievement in reading, global self-esteem measures, adequacy of child care, and levels of social services; and refine the model for restructuring. Results include the following: (1) absenteeism steadily decreased from a mean of 41 days in 1986 to 21 days at the end of 1991; (2) home conditions of at-risk children were found to be "neglectful"; (3) there was variability across sites in self-esteem data; (4) there was significantly increased parental involvement; and (5) special education referral rate changes were positive. Overall, the program was found to be a unique initiative that sought to reduce children's risk of failure and, within that context, represents a viable option for school restructuring. Included are 3 figures, 7 tables, and 10 references. (JB)

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FORGING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:
A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING FOR LANGUAGE-MINORITY STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

No one single, agreed-upon definition of "restructuring" unites educators; nor is there a definitive model of how it might be applied (O'Neil, 1988). However, scholars agree that restructuring does not add more of the same, or even significantly improve the current school structure (Harvey & Crandall, 1988). Some, for example, claim that restructuring involves altering a school's pattern of rules and relationships in order to bring about substantially different results from those schools currently produce. What seems common to most restructuring efforts is the shared belief that the current system must be rethought, reorganized, and redeployed to become more effective.

One general restructuring option receiving much attention in the literature is **fostering school-community partnerships**. This approach aims to foster links between schools and the larger community through formal alliances with parents, service and health agencies, businesses, and other institutions. Our paper describes a school-university partnership that redeployed its social service and educational resources to stem the drop-out rate of language-minority, elementary school children over a period of six years.

Initiated in 1985, this university-school partnership project completed its sixth year in June 1991. Fordham University's Graduate School Education and Social Services teamed up with two New York City Public School Districts with a heavy concentration of minority students. Funded by the Bureau of Grants Administration of the New York State Department of Education (*), Fordham's Stay-In-School Partnership Project (SSP) has collected a wealth of information and data on the short- and long-term impact of this type of school-community venture over the last six years. We are encouraged by our findings and experiences, in particular, the nature and types of successful prevention strategies that we have been monitoring, and their cumulative effects on elementary school students' achievement and their families.

OBJECTIVES

Our case study: (1) specifies those successful dropout prevention practices and strategies employed by social service and educational personnel; (2) examines the short- and long-term effects yielded from attendance records, educational achievement in reading, global self esteem measures, adequacy of child care, and levels of social service; and (3) refines our model for restructuring that incorporates university as well as school-based resources.

*

We want to acknowledge the New York State Education Department for funding this project. A special thanks to Mary Amuge and Charles Graber of this department for their continuous support.

PERSPECTIVE

Tagiuri's school climate framework (cited in Smey-Richman, 1991) has motivated our case study. Tagiuri (1968) conceptualized climate as the "total environmental quality within an organization" (cited in Smey-Richman, 1991, p.2) consisting of four dimensions: (1) **ecology** (physical and material aspects); (2) **milieu** (social dimension created by the characteristics of groups of persons); (3) **culture** (social dimension created by belief system, values, cognitive structures, and meaning); and (4) **social system** (social dimension created by the relationships of persons and groups). In our own study we use three basic undefined terms: **system**, **state**, and **observable**. At an intuitive level, a **system** is some part of the real world that is the object of our study; a **state** is a specification of what our system is like at a particular time; and an **observable** of the system is some feature of the system that can, at least in principle, be measured. These three basic concepts are interrelated and assumed in our interpretation of Tagiuri's framework on school climate. It is Tagiuri's social system dimension that, in our opinion, holds promise in advancing our understanding of current restructuring options that combine school-community resources.

(A more formal representation of his framework views these categories as a set of mappings, $f:A \rightarrow B$, wherein **A** represents school climate which in turn maps into **B**. Interpreting Tagiuri's framework from this **relational perspective**, or set of mappings, enabled us to identify the different types of causality (efficient, material, and final) that are embedded in Tagiuri's framework and that might account for some of the positive and negative effects of SSP to be reported below.)

At a less formal level, this quote from An Imperiled Generation: Saving Urban Schools (Carnegie Foundation, 1988) captures the SSP spirit: "Bold, aggressive action is needed now to avoid leaving a huge and growing segment of the nation's youth civically unprepared and economically unempowered. This nation must see the urban school crisis for what it is: a major failure of social policy, a piecemeal approach to a problem that requires a unified response." This call to action permeated the various SSP projects that were initiated by New York State Department of Education from 1986 to 1991.

METHODS

To better understand the linkage between school restructuring and social system, our longitudinal, case study identified various observables (to be reported below) and combined descriptive and analytical techniques. At-risk children included those children who had more than 15 absences per year, failed to make adequate progress in school, achieved below their expected age-grade level, and who were likely to be retained in grade and/or referred to special educational services.

Three to five elementary schools in two large public school districts of East Harlem and the South Bronx have been partners with Fordham in SSP. One hundred twenty children spanning grades K-5 and their parents have participated since it began: 24 percent are Afro-American and 66 percent are Hispanic. These children and their families

received a comprehensive set of coordinated services from Fordham's social service staff (play therapy, counseling, advocacy, consultation, family problem-solving) and educational personnel (tutoring using whole language approaches, individualized instruction, and parental workshops). In addition, classroom teachers and building administrators received timely in-service training on issues and practices related to at-risk learners.

To appreciate the efforts of coordination between the Graduate Schools of Fordham University (Education and Social Services) and the New York City Public School Districts, the figure below identifies the "flow" of information and communication that transpired between and within these organizational units from 1985-91.

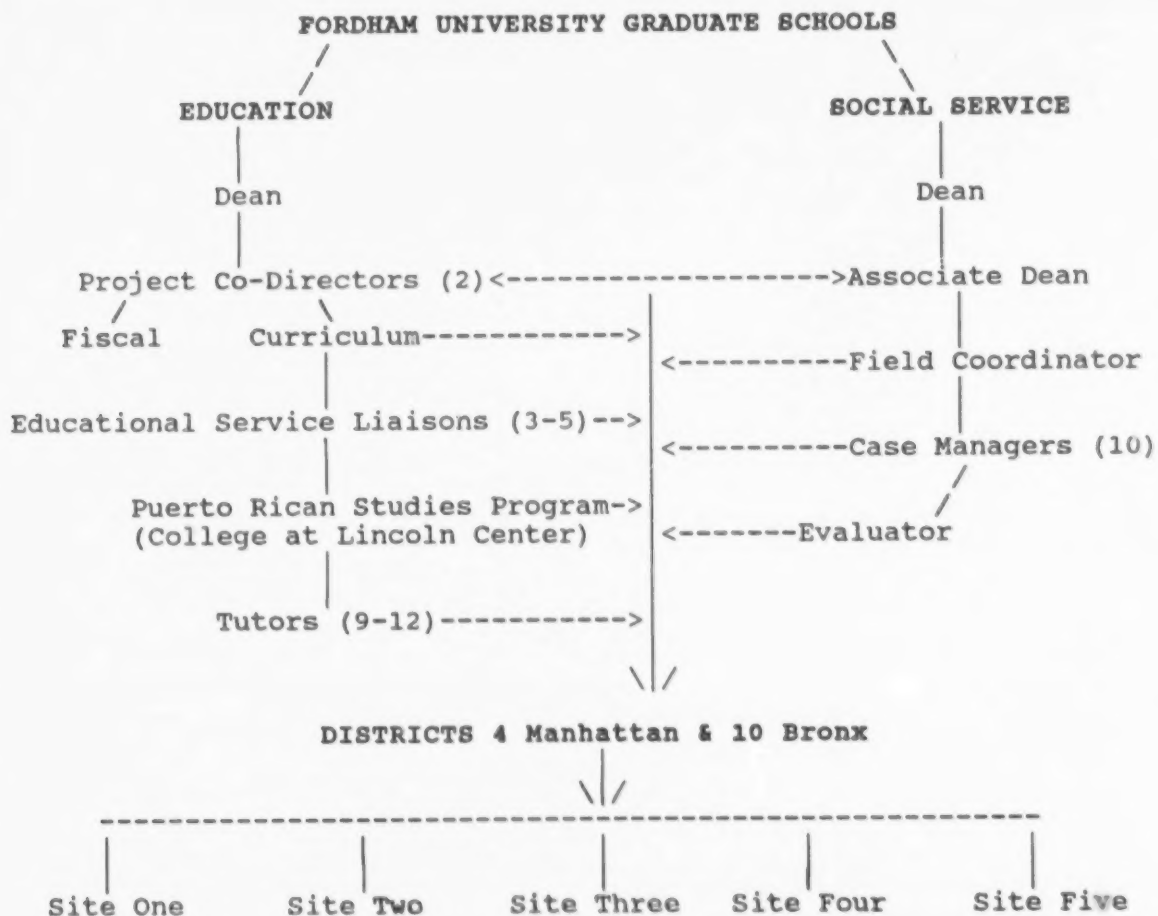


Figure 1. Organizational Chart of Stay-In-School Partnership Project: Fordham University & Districts 4 & 10, 1985-1991.

This chart identifies the key units within Fordham University and the districts responsible for realizing the objectives of SSP. Communication within Fordham and district personnel were maintained by project coordinators and field personnel. An average of 15 staff (from Fordham University) participated in SSP each year.

A pre/post test design using descriptive data and difference-score effect sizes (ES) as the metric (Feltz et al., 1988) were used to ascertain the practical effects of the project in the areas of: (1) absenteeism, (2) educational achievement in reading, (3) adequacy of child care, and (4) self esteem. Project staff diligently collected these data at periodic intervals, thereby providing a substantial database for comparative purposes. (While the results of the application of parametric and non-parametric statistics are reported succinctly in this paper, a more complete analysis can be found in the final reports submitted to the New York State Education Department for each year of the project.)

DATA SOURCES

A combination of data sources were identified to monitor SSP's activities and impact. Reliability of standardized instruments are indicated in parentheses.

Observable	Instrumentality	Date Collected	Analytic Technique
Attendance of Target Population	Attendance Lists	Yearly/monthly	t-test Effect Size (ES)
Educational Achievement	Kaufman K-TEA, Brief Form (reading & math) (.76-.84)	Spring-to-Spring	t-test (ES)
Adequacy of Child Care	Childhood Level of Living Scale (.64-.88)	Fall & Spring	t-test (ES)
Self Esteem	Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (.87-.92)	Spring-to-Spring	Descriptive Measures
Social Service Activities	Levels of Social Service Form	Daily/monthly	Chi-square
Tutoring	Logs & Educational Service Plan	Weekly	Categorical
Special Education Referrals	List of referrals	Spring	Categorical
Parental & Staff Training	Workshop Evaluation Questionnaires	End of each workshop	Descriptive Measures
Practice Profile of SSP	Questionnaires & Interviews		Componential analysis

Figure 2. Data Sources for Stay-In-School Partnership Project, 1985-91.

RESULTS

The major results of SSP at the end of six years were as follows:

Absenteeism

Absenteeism steadily decreased from a mean of 41 days in 1986 to 21 days at the end of 1991, an impressive decrease of 48 percent. While results at individual sites varied from year to year, SSP accomplished one of its major goals--to reverse the negative effects of not attending school. A similar finding occurred in District 10 which joined the project in 1988. (Final evaluation reports include all the results of correlated t-tests.) Table 1 reports mean number of absences for each year of SSP within and across all sites.

Table 1. Mean Absences for SSP Sites, 1986--1991.

SITE	YEAR OF PROJECT					
	^a 1985-86 (Year 1)	1986-87 (Year 2)	1987-88 (Year 3)	1988-89 (Year 4)	1989-90 (Year 5)	1990-91 (Year 6)
DISTRICT 4:						
PS 96	38	36	37	25	^b NA	NA
PS 101	44	43	38	23	16	19
PS 121	39	48	39	26	26	23
TOTAL	41 (54) ^c	42 (59)	38 (54)	25 (36)	21 (43)	21 (39)
DISTRICT 10:						
		(Year 1)	(Year 2)	(Year 3)	(Year 4)	
PS 46	not applicable	53	46	NA	NA	
PS 85	not applicable	50	49	20	29	
TOTAL		52 (40)	48 (40)	20 (20)	29 (18)	

^a Mean absences of 1985-86 school year were used as base figure for SSP in District 4; mean absences of 1987-88 school year were used as base figure for District 10.

^b Due to funding reductions, sites designated as NA were not serviced that year.

^c Number of participants for which absences were reported.

These data are encouraging: Absenteeism was reduced from a mean of 41 days at the end of Year 1 to a mean of 21 days in Year 6. When one considers the nature and mobility of the target populations and

different grade levels (K-5) that were serviced by social service interns and tutors, these results are very positive indeed.

One major reason for increased attendance is due to the attentive activities of social service interns and their field coordinator as manifested in the Levels of Social Service forms that each case manager completed for each child (client). This form recorded the type and nature of contact for each child and family in the project, e.g., individual/group contact, family, school personnel, outside agencies, workshops, telephone use. To illustrate this aspect of SSP, Table 2 summarizes the total number of contacts for District 4 sites between September and May of Year 6 of the project. Frequency data are reported for each category.

Table 2. Levels of Social Service Categories for SSP Sites, September 1990-May 1991.

LEVEL OF SERVICE	PS 96	PS 101	PS 121
Individual/Group	354	382	402
Family	204	210	193
School Personnel	326	238	291
Agencies	14	31	16
Telephone	206	287	235

These frequencies capture the types and extent to which social service interns made contacts for parents and their children during the sixth year of the project. Results of the application of chi-square contingency analyses yielded significant differences among all categories across the sites (chi square=40.8; $p=.001$), most likely due to the two distinct subgroups of target children in SSP--those continuing from previous years and others new to the project in 1990--as well as operating in two different districts. Other factors might also have accounted for these differences, such as working conditions at each site and a new group of social service interns for each project year.

Educational Achievement

Table 3 summarizes SSP reading performance from 1985-1991. The reader is cautioned in making any definite conclusions from these data for various reasons. Due to incomplete and inadequate prior reading test data in the cumulative record folders of the target population along with the different tests required by the New York City Board of Education, it was decided to use a standardized achievement measure (Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement) for diagnostic and achievement purposes. Achievement data were collected at four points in time. The first testing was completed by the end of December, 1985 to establish prior achievement scores for the first year of the project; the second testing occurred in May 1986 for the posttest. The other testing intervals were May 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991, respectively. It should be pointed out that after the first year of the project, some students moved to other districts or into other programs, and new students were added to the project. SSP sought to maintain a target group of 20 children per site for each year. Mean normal curve equivalents (NCE) are reported because of the mathematical properties of this metric for comparative purposes.

TIME OF TESTING

C

10

Adequacy of Child Care Conditions

An important feature of SSP was to determine the adequacy of childhood living conditions. Table 4 summarizes the results of the Childhood Level of Living Scale (CLL), a measure that yields information on the adequacy of child care. According to Polansky et al. (1978), this instrument contains two major parts: Part A--Physical Care, dealing with basic issues of food, clothing, shelter, safety, health care; and Part B--Emotional/Cognitive Care, having to do with providing growth experiences and emotional support. Case manager interns, under the supervision of the social service coordinator, completed this rating scale for each target child during each year of the project. A similar pre/posttest design was used. (It should be pointed out that different groups of case-manager interns completed the CLL scale each year.) Mean raw scores are reported. Only District 4 data are included.

Table 4. Mean Raw Scores of Childhood Level of Living Scale^a
(CLL) for SSP Participants, 1986-91.^b

SITE	TIME OF COMPLETION OF CLL						
	12/85	5/86	5/87	5/88	5/89	5/90	5/91
DISTRICT 4:							
PS 96	49	54	42	54	55	NA ^c	NA
PS 101	59	58	51	47	58	49	59
PS 121	51	58	45	47	60	61	53
TOTAL	54	57	47	49	58	55	53

^a The Childhood Level of Living Scale (CLL) was devised to assess the level of neglect or deprivation that existed in the home environment. Neglect is defined as "a condition in which a caretaker responsible for a child either deliberately or by extraordinary inattentiveness permits the child to experience avoidable present suffering and fails to provide one or more of the ingredients generally deemed essential for developing a person's physical, intellectual and emotional capabilities" (Polansky et al., 1978). Scores can be interpreted according to the following categories:

Seriously Neglectful	0 - 47	(20th percentile)
Neglectful	48 - 62	(40th percentile)
Marginal Child Care	63 - 76	(50th percentile)
Acceptable Child Care	77 - 87	(80th percentile)
Good Child Care	80 - 99	(100th percentile)

^b Final evaluation reports for each year of SSP have number of children for which data were available; an average of 20 children per site. ^c Due to funding reductions, sites with NA designation were not serviced that year.

These descriptive data, yielded from the CLL, indicate that the case-managers in general perceived the home condition of at-risk children as falling within the category of "neglectful." Pre/post scores within all SSP sites confirm this conclusion. This finding, then, of "neglectful" home care--as perceived by social service interns--was a consistent trend across all sites and must be considered in reaching any firm conclusions about the overall impact of this project on at-risk learners.

Self Esteem

Since self concept was considered one of the major goals of SSP, self esteem data were collected from 1987-91. It was reasoned that student perceptions of how they felt about themselves in social, family, and personal areas of experience could be useful in coordinating the efforts of the social service and educational components, respectively. Tutoring and play therapy being the two modes of direct student service within each component, awareness of each student's level of self esteem was helpful in improving each component. Within this context, the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (SEI) (School Form) was administered to determine the evaluation an individual makes about him- or herself, i.e., "overall self-esteem is an expression of approval or disapproval, indicating the extent to which a person believes him- or herself competent, successful, significant, and worthy" (Coopersmith, 1986, pp.1-2). Sample items from this checklist included: "Things usually don't bother me;" "I get upset easily at home;" "I'm popular with kids my own age;" "I often get discouraged at school." (To be noted is that case managers adapted the SEI for children in grades 1 and 2, and for those who had difficulty in completing the SEI). Table 5 summarizes the mean raw score results of the SEI administration for each site.

Table 5. Mean Raw Scores of Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory for SSP Participants, 1987-91.

SITE	PROJECT YEAR			
	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
DISTRICT 4:				
	a		b	
PS 96	53 (13)	63 (15)	NA	NA
PS 101	44 (18)	58 (27)	49 (23)	62 (19)
PS 121	48 (17)	47 (17)	61 (20)	64 (20)
TOTAL	48 (48)	56 (59)	55 (43)	63 (39)
DISTRICT 10:				
PS 46		38 (19)	NA	NA
PS 85		41 (43)	52 (20)	65 (18)
TOTAL		40 (62)	52 (20)	65 (18)

a
Number of pupils in parentheses.

b
Due to funding reductions, NA sites were not serviced that year.

These self esteem data show variability across all sites. If raw scores

on the SEI between 26-74 (interquartile range) are viewed as indicative of "medium self esteem," then, in general, the majority of score types fall within this category (the lower quartile being indicative of "low self esteem" and the upper quartile designated as "high self esteem"). These findings demonstrate the consistent influence of SSP on children's self esteem.

Special Education Referrals

In addition to these findings on absenteeism, reading, childhood living conditions, and self esteem, special education referral rates are very positive. Table 6 reports the number of target children and corresponding referral rates at the end of each year of SSP.

Table 6. Special Education Referrals for SSP, 1985-1991.

Year	Special Education Referrals	Percentage
		^a
1986-87	2	3% (61)
1987-88	1	1% (62)
1988-89	2	2% (100)
1989-90	2	3% (63)
1990-91	3	5% (60)

^a Number of participants in project.

These data indicate a very low referral rate to special education from 1985 to 1991, another indicator of the preventive effect of SSP.

Parental Involvement

Probably, one of the most significant effects of the project occurred in parental involvement. Through the combined efforts of social service and educational staff, many parents became more aware of and involved in ways to solve their social and school-related concerns. This was partly due to the formal workshops that were conducted by Fordham professors on parental concerns (e.g., relating to school negotiations, child behaviors) and the accompanying increase in parental attendance for many school functions.

In addition, weekly levels of service recorded by social service interns indicated a wide variety of contacts in such areas as: (1) individual/ group; (2) family; (3) school personnel; (4) agencies; and (5) telephone use. These levels of social service functions were summarized in Table 2. The majority of parents made use of services related to housing, social security, public assistance, day care, legal issues, after school care, substance abuse, medical and psychological, and speech, hearing and visual disorders. The on-site presence of social service interns made these contacts possible.

Two training manuals--one to orient tutors in structuring tutoring activities and another to orient parents in various topics on child care--were developed in the first two years of the project, and utilized in workshops.

Table 7 summarizes the results of SSP corresponding to its main objectives; it includes those observables reported in previous tables. In addition to raw scores, effect sizes are included for reading, math, and home care conditions. This metric, instead of statistical significance tests, conveys both the magnitude and direction of the practical significance of these observables (Feltz et al., 1988). With this in mind, the "ups-and-downs" displayed by these data are captured.

Table 1. Results of Stay-In-School Partnership (SSP) Project:
Fordham University--Public School Districts, 1985-1991.

OBJECTIVE	PROJECT YEAR					
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
A						
REDUCTION IN ABSENCES D4:	41	42	38	25	21	21
(Mean Days Absent) D10:	NA	NA	52	48	20	29
B						
IMPROVEMENT IN READING D4:	NA	+ .005	- .08	+ .28	+ .46	- .08
(Effect Size Data) D10:	NA	NA	NA	+ .21	+ .37	- .25
C						
IMPROVEMENT IN MATH D4:	NA	- .09	+ .25	+ .32	+ .19	- .02
(Effect Size Data) D10:	NA	NA	+ .95	- .48	- .48	- .37
D						
HOME CARE CONDITIONS D4:	NA	+ .39	+ .69	+ .60	+ .60	+ .02
(Effect Size Data) D10:	NA	NA	NA	NA	+ .73	- .11
E						
SELF ESTEEM D4:	NA	NA	52	60	56	62
(Median Raw Scores) D10:	NA	NA	NA	52	52	68
F						
SPECIAL EDUCATION						
REFERRALS	NA	2	1	2	2	3

Spring-to-Spring Data Sources: A=monthly lists; B=Kaufman K-TEA (short form); C=Kaufman K-TEA (short form); D=Childhood Level of Living Scale; E=Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory; F=end of year referrals

Practice Profile of SSP

A practice profile consisting of six components (assessment, record-keeping, play therapy, tutoring, coordination, and family problem-solving) was formulated by this evaluator in collaboration with social service and educational staff of SSP.

The practice profile specifies Fordham's Stay-In-School Partnership Project by using an adaptation of the practice profile method of Loucks and Crandall (1982). According to these authorities in change theory, the profile is an all-purpose tool that can "provide a standardized, systematic, cost-effective way to summarize program components and requirements" (p.1). One aim of this tool is to facilitate communication among users, evaluators, and potential adopters of innovative practices. Since many of the state-funded projects claimed to be "innovative" in responding to at-risk learners and included descriptions about goals, philosophy, and approaches, it was only reasonable to apply the practice profile concept to Fordham's project. In addition to on-site observations, this entailed a critical analysis of documents (proposals, manuals, forms, etc.) and interviews with project personnel responsible for implementing the educational and social service goals of the project. Examination of these qualitative data yielded from observations of practices, content analysis of documents, and responses to open-ended questionnaires resulted in the following practice profile (Figure 3) of SSP. ("Components" are the major operational features or parts of the profile.)

IDEAL	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Component 1: Assessment (1) Participants are assessed individually with combination of tests, teacher judgment, inventories, & interviews.	(2) Participants are assessed individually using teacher judgment only.	(3) Participants are not assessed individually.
Component 2: Record-Keeping (1) Individual record forms are kept up-to-date for counseling & tutoring.	(2) Individual record forms are occasionally updated for counseling & tutoring.	(3) No individual records are kept at all.
Component 3: Play-Therapy (1) Participants receive play therapy for 45 minutes once per week. Each session is equally divided between participants.	(2) Participants receive play therapy for 45 minutes once per week. Time for each participant and activity varies slightly when necessary.	(3) Participants do not receive play therapy for 45 minutes per week, or time for each child and each activity varies markedly or is not considered.
Component 4: Tutoring (1) Students receive personal tutoring for 20 minutes each day. Activities are based on performance contract cooperatively decided on by classroom teacher & educational service liason (ESL).	(2) Students receive one-to-tutoring for 40 minutes each week. Activities are not based on performance contract.	(3) Students do not receive one-to-one tutoring for 40 minutes per week.

CODE: _____ Variations to the right are unacceptable; variations to the left are acceptable.
 -----Variations to the left are ideal, as determined by developers.

Figure 3. Practice Profile of Fordham--Districts 4 & 10 Stay-In-School Partnership Project, 1986-1991.

ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Component 5: Coordination (1) Articulation & consultation are maintained among SSP team and school staff (principal, classroom teachers) at frequent intervals.	(2) Articulation & consultation are not maintained among SSP team and school staff (principal, classroom teachers) at frequent intervals.
Component 6: Family Problem-Solving (1) Families with at-risk children are taught strategies & skills to solve problems through counseling and other supportive means.	(2) Families with at-risk children are not taught strategies & skills to solve problems through counseling and other supportive means.

CODE: _____ Variations to the right are unacceptable; variations to the left are acceptable.

-----Variations to the left are ideal, as determined by developer

Figure 3. Practice Profile of Fordham--Districts 4 & 10 SSP- con't

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF SSP

In this paper we presented the results of Fordham's Stay-In-School Partnership Project with two New York City public school districts over the last six years in the hope that they contribute to the conversation about school restructuring and increased understanding of the complex issues confronting at-risk children and school personnel (as recently portrayed in Slavin & Yampolsky, 1991.) Observables related to the social system dimension of Tagiuri's school climate model were identified and analyzed. Data about absenteeism, educational achievement, child care conditions, self esteem, levels of social service, and parental involvement were reported. In particular, the preventive strategies and effective practices of SSP identified in this paper can benefit others who are taking similar steps of "aggressive action" to bring about positive change in urban schools for these children and their families. The Stay-In-School-Partnership Project, initiated by the New York State Department of Education in 1985 to link university resources to school organizations, was a unique initiative that sought to reduce children's risk of failure. Within this context, it represents a viable option for school restructuring.

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